SYNOPSIS

of the thesis titled

Exploration of the Elements of Dystopia, and Decadence in the Selected Novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee

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By

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The two World Wars of the twentieth century changed the course of human imagination. The utopian world crumbled at the realization of human frailty and futility of life (Claeys, "Origins" 108). And post-world war paved way for the notions of dystopia and decadence in the literary preoccupation. The study of dystopia and decadence became more relevant than before. The rise and advancement of science and technology were designed to propel humanity and help in creating a utopian or an idealized world. However, the abuse of power with the presence of human depravity initiated a downward journey that ends in misery and destruction. Loss of faith in the man-made systems and society, excess in human indulgence, disruption to the moral fabric of society became overarching themes in some of the novels across the world including India. Upamanyu Chatterjee, an Indian novelist, explores these themes in detail in his narratives. This study examines the elements of dystopia and decadence in the select novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee and attempts to investigate the relevance of the dystopian features in his works. The novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee portray decline and culminate into a world marked by deterioration, decay and boredom. The ambience of decay observed through the prism of dystopia and decadence analyses the narratives' thematic expressions of listlessness, estrangement, and boredom to arrive at an informed understanding of the writer's worldview.

Dystopia is widely understood as a fictional state of pronounced anguish and unfairness in society. The Cambridge Dictionary defines dystopia as a place or a society that identifies itself with prejudicial practices leading to inexplicable suffering in the future. As an imagined society, dystopia is marked by a threat of destruction and chaos to humankind ("Dystopia"). As a concept antithetical to the notion of Utopia envisaged by Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia* (1516), Dystopia emerged as a mode of expression of the modern world's complexities in the works of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley,

and others. Contrary to the Utopian idea of being a ‘good’ or ‘ideal’ place, dystopia is perceived as a ‘bad’ place over the years (Sargent 5). Dystopia in literature emerged when the totalitarian regimes abused power and controlled societies within their rule (Claeys, “News” 145). The ‘ideal’ relationships and administration systems in utopia's ‘perfect’ orientations showed a steady decline in dystopias.

In addition to dystopia, the concept of decadence helps to explain the shift in the literary imagination towards a pessimistic worldview of the society. Decadence is generally understood as a period of decline in morals characterized by acts of extreme indulgences in all forms of pleasure or luxury. In the words of David Weir, decadence draws its origin from the Latin word *decadēre,* which means “to decay.” Further, he notes that historically, the term refers to the consequences of the fall of the Roman Empire and concerning a few Emperors who encouraged mindless and unwarranted debauchery (Weir). References to the decline are also seen in the field of art and literature in the nineteenth century. In this sense, decadence emerges as a movement with altercations by embracing subjects and themes that seem shocking to readers. However, literary works of the twentieth century have extensively used the features of decadence in varied ways to deal with themes of dystopia (Smith 640).

The concepts of decadence and dystopia are crucial in understanding and establishing the contemporaneity of Upamanyu Chatterjee's fictional world. Upamanyu Chatterjee’s narratives offer a version of the world that can be interpreted as disturbing and gloomy. They draw significance to the ‘realities’ and display the potential to startle us with portrayals that appear ‘inexplicable’ and ‘uncomfortable.’ They describe a wretched world where there seems to be a discord between the characters and their immediate environment. Among his contemporaries who explored the themes of complexities of a life lived in modern society, Chatterjee presents a unique case with

his representation of individuals who go through a life of monotony and are caught in a state of inaction. His characters seem to lack purpose, but they also indicate a tacit pursuit. This world of ambiguity and its various aspects necessitate a new prism to identify alternative versions of dystopia in his novels.

This study examines the select works of Upamanyu Chatterjee to analyze the significance of dystopian elements in his works. It employs three distinct ways to achieve the purpose: First, a comprehensive study of research articles on the writer and his published works is detailed; second, a study of interviews in print/ visual media to gather an understanding of Chatterjee's fictional world and the common strands that string the works together is attempted; finally, the study makes a critical evaluation of the seminal works of Upamanyu Chatterjee focusing on the concepts of dystopia and decadence. The following select novels that have traces of decadence and dystopia have been selected for the study:

English, August: An Indian Story (1988)
The Last Burden (1993)
The Mammaries of the Welfare State (2000)
Weight Loss (2006)
Way To Go (2011)
Fairy Tales at Fifty (2014)

Further, *The Revenge of the Non-Vegetarian* (2018) and *The Assassination of Indira Gandhi: Collected Stories of Upamanyu Chatterjee* (2019) are used as secondary sources to strengthen the understanding of the texts.

The study of tracing the elements of dystopia and decadence in Upamanyu Chatterjee is relevant for a number of reasons. His works occupy a prominent place in Indian Writing in English with their sheer presence and unique nature of thematic exploration. Chatterjee's fiction corpus has grown over the years with new additions to

novels and short stories. Bruce King discusses Chatterjee's novels among other novelists such as Amitav Ghosh, Pankaj Mishra, Tabish Khair and finds his novels unique. "Because his subject matter is often outrageous and brings to prominence body functions, the prevalence of corruption and incompetence, he is regarded as a satirist." (King19). Despite the unique nature of his works, it is worth noting that critical reviews of Chatterjee's works are scarce.

To understand the world of Chatterjee and his narratives, we need to survey his background. Upamanyu Chatterjee began his writing career with *English, August: An Indian Story,* in 1988. The popularity of his first work established Chatterjee, who was serving in the Indian Administrative Service, as a writer to reckon with. He gained popularity because of his wry sense of humor and wit. His writing brought him awards and recognition worldwide, including Order of Office des Arts et des Letters by the French government, a Writer in Residence at the University of Kent, and a Sahitya Academy Award for his novel *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*.

His fictional world insinuates desperation and lacks inspiration. Characters in his narratives are frequently found in disheveled, dilapidated, and unscrupulous circumstances. The protagonists lead dismal lives with despair and desolation. Unsuccessful pursuits and discomfort in facing the 'truths' of life become an essential part of the narratives. Each of the novels represents the darkness which resembles the dystopian bleakness and depiction of decadent behaviors. The novels predominantly deal with the themes of loneliness and boredom, sexual indulgence and depravity; violence and morbidity; and hopelessness and meaninglessness.

English, August: An Indian Story is Chatterjee's debut novel, and it tells the narrative of Agastya, a young man who is sent to Madna as an Indian Administrative

Trainee. Bureaucracy and the new place begin to create a sense of boredom and apathy in Agastya. The novel places the inadequacies of the administration and its impact on Madna. The 'developmental work' is stunted; people care less about the symbols of the past and are hopeless about the future. Agastya observes forms of regression in people and the place. There is little that he learns from the place. Agastya experiences boredom and loneliness due to the inability to adapt to an 'alien' place. He is also unable to connect to the people in Madna. Destruction of the national symbols and unhygienic ways of Madna provides a perfect escape for Agastya. He coils within and spends more time with himself that makes the most of the narrative. Through Agastya, we see the scenarios of boredom, apathy, and loneliness he experiences in Madna.

In *The Last Burden*, Chatterjee presents a story of a disintegrated family. The novel goes back and forth, bringing the past and the present, almost making it difficult to recognize the flow of the novel. Chatterjee narrates the story of Jamun, who is lonesome and struggles to make amends with his family. Family members are a bunch of dysfunctional individuals who care less about resolving issues within the family and continue to push each other emotionally. They seem to negotiate their feelings and needs keeping themselves first and taking on roles of disgruntled individuals who refuse to see another's perspectives. The novel presents a hopeless set of individuals. The story begins with the ailing mother, Urmila, who struggles to cope with her husband, Shyamanand. He is difficult and adamant and imposes his values on others, especially Burfi and Joyce. The conflicts arise when Urmila is on her death bed. She wails through the past incidents and leaves the family as disintegrated as earlier. But this time, the family collapses with Jamun taking care of Shyamanand. Jamun's inability to cope with the scenarios, loneliness, and suicidal tendency make the protagonist a haggard and lost young man.

The novel *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* is a sequel to Chatterjee's *English, August.* This novel throws open the caprices of the welfare state. Agastya continues to be a part of the administration. He is more experienced in understanding how to adapt to the changing scenarios in his work. The apathy of the inefficient government, the rule of a political dynasty, and corrupt practices make this novel a treatise of bureaucratic corruption. As for Agastya's personal life, it remains more or less the same. He has a few acquaintances but meanders through the phases of boredom, but like in the prequel, he becomes an observer of the administration and its horrid state of affairs. The novel also brings a few characters like Bhupen Raghupati, an officer who cares less about his job but is found to be either getting sexual favors from his massage boy in the office or lusting over his female colleagues. The novel presents a corrupt and self-indulged individual and inefficient and dull system of administration through the eyes of Agastya.

Chatterjee's *Weight Loss* narrates the story of Bhola, who is obsessed with sex and weight. He is mocked for his overweight and effeminate features by his Physical Education teacher, Anthony. Bhola defecates due to uncontrollable bowel movements in his teacher's office. He is then gets rusticated from school, and this makes him lie to his parents. He meanders through the streets as he has no place to go. His constant grappling with his sex life and weight turns the novel into a tragic and sad narrative. His inability to control his choices and his incessant lustful feelings for vegetable vendors Titli, Moti, and his cook Gopinath make the description more titillating and disturbing. The acts of sex and his uncontrollable desire for his sexual partners obscures his life. Bhola somehow finds a balanced state when he gets married to Kamala and has a daughter. Unfortunately, he is haunted by his past filled with sexual escapades. He ends himself leaving behind a trail of sexual partners and a family that he could not do

justice to throughout his adult life. The novel thus becomes a tragic tale of Bhola, who dies young due to his extreme indulgences in sex with absolutely no control over his urges.

Way To Go, a sequel to *The Last Burden*, continues to narrate the journey of Jamun with Shyamanand missing from home. The novel envisages the hopelessness and futility of finding his father when Shyamanand perhaps has gone to be never found. Jamun is found lonesome again. This time he has no one to go back to and sadly no way to go. The story highlights the futility of life and how it does not bring about a happy closure to any journey.

Fairy Tales at Fifty narrates a gruesome story of individuals in a dystopian setting. The story begins with the twins Jhabua Anguli and Nirip, who are separated by birth. Interestingly, one becomes a serial killer, and the other is the heir of the wretched world. Jhabua Anguli's obsession with murder and sexual conquests propels the narration into bringing alive the folktale that ends with Buddha liberating Angulimala from his acts of cruelty. In Chatterjee's tale, Anguli continues to indulge in cruelty without the hint of redemption. In contrast, Nirip is devastated to find himself an orphan. He is an heir to the businesses run by Pashupati, who happens to be his foster father. Perversion and acts of morbidity can be found in Pashupati's world of cruelty and weird business of blood farms, sale of organs, skeletons, and human bones. He is also described as an individual who thrives on sexual acts. The narrative emerges as tale about gruesome acts of violence and a journey of life and death.

The novels, as discussed earlier, depict the lives of individuals who appear incapable of grappling with or understanding their environments as they feel estranged from the immediate surroundings and sometimes from themselves. Their lives seem

'unconventional.' This is perhaps due to their expressions of the 'decline' and chaos of the world they inhabit. This study finds the elements of dystopia and decadence as the reasons for the gloomy and not so pleasant world. Therefore, the study uses references from the texts to argue that these elements of chaos and estrangement give the novels a 'unique' texture. The study finds the sexual indulgences as decadent, not as an amoral behaviour but chooses to point out decadence to interpret the given lethargy, lies, corruption, estrangement, dirt, and unethical practices of the world. The study does not propose in any form to suggest moral appropriateness or otherwise in the novels. It only analyses the novels within the purview of dystopia and decadence.

Given the issues and arguments mentioned, the study is outlined in five chapters. The introductory chapter introduces the author, Upamanyu Chatterjee, and his works. Further, it provides a literature review and the research gaps found in the criticism on the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee. As Chatterjee belongs to the generation of the 1980s, a brief survey of the literary and historical development is provided. The study discusses concerns explored in the writings of Chatterjee's contemporaries. After locating the writer in the context and attempting to understand his significance, the study summarizes his works. Upamanyu Chatterjee's major works chosen for the study have been introduced in detail with recurring themes, major strands, and issues. The chapter ends with an indication of the strong presence of dystopia and decadence in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee.

The second chapter, titled "Tracing elements of dystopia in the works of Upamanyu Chatterjee," maps the features of dystopia to the literary representations in the world of Chatterjee. First, it discusses the origins of dystopia and its historical development and varied representations in literature. On highlighting the features of dystopia, the chapter initiates an exploration of the dystopian elements in Chatterjee's

literary world. It examines how the world created in Chatterjee's fiction could be interpreted using the lens of a dystopian world in the following novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee: *English August: An Indian Story, The Mammaries of the Welfare State, The Last Burden, Way To Go, Weight Loss, and Fairy Tales at Fifty*.

This chapter provides an overall understanding of the term dystopia and the general framework of a dystopian world. Dystopia is a genre that finds its place in extreme authoritarian governments controlling its citizens for fear of being overpowered by them. Dystopia is often understood and depicted as an imaginary state with restrictions on personal freedom. After World War I, human potential saw a significant rise in the field of science and reason. But the dangers of the abuse of such great possibilities replaced the dreams of ideal societies portrayed in the 'utopian' imagination. In this historical conjuncture, the 'ideal' communities happened to be depicted in decadent forms. Hence, understanding dystopia as a framework that criticizes the ideal society seemed to have emerged in the popular imagination (Claeys, "Origins" 145),

It is interesting to note that all the dystopian enterprises would not necessarily be the opposite of utopias. These endeavours could only be seen as a broad and general means postulating their version of the contemporary society that needs reformation and improvement in its varied dimensions. It seems to be an argument that would never cease to challenge scholars as the terms themselves appear ambiguous due to their diverse uses and perceived meanings historically. (Claeys, "Origins"108). In the case of Chatterjee, dystopia gets embedded in the form rather than the content of his fictional world. The state of being in inaction and hopelessness becomes the critique of the society one inhabits. In this context, the views of Lyman Tower Sargent, Gregory

Claeys, Keith Booker and their understanding of the genre dystopia and utopia provided the study a foundation on which novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee were analysed.

From the study of dystopian novels and the critics' views of both genres, dystopia, and utopia, it could be perceived that most literary dystopias seek the need for the reconstitution of society. They are primarily set in the future. Manipulation of human behaviour and genetic and biological engineering technologies also impact society and are generally seen as a dystopian tradition. These impacts heightened by totalitarian collectivism and its display of authority on the desired human behaviour can be found in great length in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) and *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley. Such dystopias' common theme is a colossal, dictatorial governance commanding and compelling outright compliance from people, seldom confronted but ultimately welcomed by the failure of a few individuals facilitated by the advances in science and technology to guarantee complete authority.

Dystopia vis-à-vis the fiction of Aldous Huxley and George Orwell gives us a few pointers to bring dystopia within the gamut of Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels. However, it is interesting to note that Chatterjee's dystopian world has features distinct from them as well. Going by the ambiance of the genre built in the fiction by Orwell and Huxley, it is quite evident that the bleakness (darker elements) in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also evident in the works of Upamanyu Chatterjee, notwithstanding the marked contrast between them. The distinction can only be explained by the lack of forthright comments on the state's political, social, and economic affairs. The novels revolve around individuals and their predicament in a chaotic and utterly desolate world. Chatterjee's world of fiction is devoid of an overarching control that makes space for choices for or on behalf of individuals. The people inhabiting that world generally do not have to abide by the norms of the authoritative government machinery. However, a

noticeable disruption of life leads to ‘loneliness’ and ‘estrangement’ in all the works chosen for the study. Generally, dystopias revolve around a utopian past or represent a decline in the moral responsibility of the governing agent. Chatterjee’s world is marked by the ‘gloomy’ and dull environment that takes precedence and through which one sees a distinct life led by individuals. These individuals and their observations/perceptions regardless of who they are and their occupation make a society that does not offer a possibility of hope. They, through their choices and inhibition, to act upon decisions express a similar bleakness. The dystopian world of Chatterjee may not resemble the authoritative regimes controlling its citizens but reminds us of a ‘weird’ space characterized by laziness, corruption, estrangement, and degeneration.

Chatterjee’s world of fiction represents the present and not the future. All that is expressed in the form of fiction-be it corruption, places, people, and situations are apparently ‘real’ as in *English, August* and *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*. Perhaps, with Chatterjee’s fiction, the idea of dystopia is reinvented. There is a dystopian engagement with the ideas of decline and disintegration of life and systems meant to empower people. Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novels envisage a hopeless world and do not incline to challenge or stop the disruption. Change is unfortunately not a choice for the protagonists in this dystopian world. They lack the enthusiasm to act towards bringing about change.

Dystopia in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s novels has similarities with the conventional dystopian narratives, yet they differ in significant ways. His novels can be viewed as an approach to identify the world described within his fiction. Conventionally, dystopia is constituted by the collapse of the social structure by employing methods to restore power with one group/regime. Chatterjee’s novels,

however, do not have an overpowered and authoritarian regime that controls the characters of the novels. Further, dystopia is noted for its representation of the "negative societies" (Claeys, "News" 145). Chatterjee's novels do present the pessimistic views of the world within the drab society. Nevertheless, they differ in the presentation of this 'negative' features of the society. Generally, the negativity is portrayed to forewarn how the present can be transformed into something horrid. They have the ability to catechize the present and offer caution; hence, they are frequently referred to as "jeremiads of utopianism." They do, however, occasionally give rays of hope (Sargisson 40). Chatterjee, however, diverges from this perspective as his dystopian world presents hopelessness as the state in itself. The second chapter, hence, examines these aspects of dystopia in the select novels of Chatterjee.

Chatterjee's fiction primarily represents hopelessness and the state of inaction. In *English August*, the dystopian aura can be found in Madna, within the protagonists, and people who inhabit Madna. The scenes of Madna draws our attention to devastation and apathy. It does not present itself as a promising land that changes people's lives and assures a secure future. Another external feature that adds to the dystopian setting is the presence of bureaucracy. The bureaucratic procedures and the lackadaisical approach to work instils a certain apathy in the individuals in the novel. There seems to an indirect connection between the external dystopian ambience and the struggle of the individual within.

In *The Last Burden*, dystopia can be viewed in familial disharmony. The external ambience of the gloomy and disharmonious environment makes Jamun alienate himself from his family. The characters behave selfishly towards each other. Conflictual relationships and the incident of sorrow and death brings Jamun to a stage where he experiences loneliness and isolation. The dark world of dystopia is in the

absence of warmth and strength of the family during extreme circumstances such as death. The darkness is seen in the struggles of individuals and their relationship with themselves in the loneliest times. The tale depicts degeneration through the deterioration of the family and its unresolvable problems. The narrative is devoid of any sense of community.

Chatterjee's *Weight Loss* involves sexual indulgences with multiple partners and a never-ending desire to fulfil the void. The emptiness hovers around the character and his actions. Bhola, the protagonist appears strange and vulnerable with incessant thirst for sex. The dystopia is in the strange, dark, and weird life that Bhola leads in the novel. The darkness is in grotesque images of Bhola's defecation in Anthony's office, his sexual encounters with his partners. Decadence is present in these images and descriptions of the characters and their life choices. In this novel, the external world does not provide any kind of support and direction in which Bhola could find his purpose of life. Unfortunately, Bhola continues to persist and pursue aimlessly yet being obsessed with sex with multiple partners. This novel seems to be darker than other novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee as the dystopian ambience lies in the emptiness that pervades the sexual pursuits of Bhola.

In *Way To Go*, the darkness looms over Jamun. The dystopian gloom is present in the futility of finding his father, Shyamanand who has decided to walk away only to be absent from his son's life. The half-paralysed individual unable to make a few steps on his own is one day not to be found. Jamun's dilemma of whether to discard the search or continue to find his missing father makes the novel gruesome and somber.

The Mammaries of the Welfare State is a novel that describes the debacle of a governing system that indulges in corruption and greed to make more from the ordinary

tax payer. The aspects of bureaucracy and ‘dirty’ politics in the novel seems to be an extension of the prequel *English August.* The aspects of dystopian aura can be found in decadent behaviours of the officers such as Bupen Raghupati and his indulgences and fantasies in the office hours.

Lives falling apart, disintegration of relationships, inefficient and life-less systems are a major focus for Chatterjee’s novels. Comfort in the uncomfortable could be seen as a strong building block for the argument that novels present a dystopian world. The choices are made by the individuals and they suffer making those choices. The dystopian world here is criticism of the notions that are already called the ‘norm’. Chatterjee’s novels challenge the ‘norm’ and attempts to establish status of chaos as the norm.

Suicides, unfulfilled lives, and stagnant places all appear to be the features of Chatterjee's bleak and dystopian world. Adding to the presence of bleakness is alienation. The characters feel lonely in most cases and prefer spending time alone. The inability to adapt to the given scenarios only increases the distance between them and their immediate environment. They form a protective space in which they find comfort in the discomfort. Agastya can be found lonely and distanced from the environment, job, and his colleagues. Agastya, like other characters, is not idealistic by nature. They do not have a past to look back nor do they wish to venture into the future. Jamun finds himself wallowing in the death of his mother and his family's incapacity to manoeuvre relationships. It is in this dystopian space that we find Chatterjee’s fiction expressing the worse of the world. It is also important to note that the dystopian and decadent features seem to overlap within the narratives making the interpretation of Chatterjee’s world unique.

Through, dystopia, Chatterjee's narratives attempt to critique the present scenario of the country such as corruption and unethical practices of the administration, education system, career mismatch in *English, August*. The novels throw open issues of life and its futility. Chatterjee offers a different perspective on dystopia by defamiliarizing the norm in order to highlight the issues of corruption, education, and the futility. Unlike the dystopian worlds depicted in other authors' writings, Chatterjee's universe is devoid of dualism or the prospects of a faraway planet. Here, bleakness becomes a reality and it is depicted by defamiliarizing the reality. Yet, this aligns with the conventional notions on dystopia that attempts to defamiliarization by converging criticism of society that is imagined in a distant place in time. This provides a new perspective on the given problems of the society which is otherwise taken for granted or treated natural and inescapable (Booker 20).

Further, there is an element of quest that makes Chatterjee's novels unique. The search for a real self, contentment in various forms draws our attention. The quest is vital in dystopia because, despite evidence of futility, the search is unavoidable. In the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee, the search for a purpose is crucial as there is evidence of futility in the search yet the search is inevitable. Lack of purpose forces the individuals to take an inward journey in the pleasures of the body. The overarching idea of self-indulgence and attempting to escape from a 'reality' serves to highlight a prominent subject of alienation throughout the works. The feeling of estrangement is linked to their search for something they have never discovered. The protagonists' quest is for the unknown, and it merely serves as a diversion from the harsh reality that will inevitably confront them at some point.

The third chapter, titled "Interrogating Decadence and Degeneration in Upamanyu Chatterjee's Novels," examines how excessive sexual indulgence and other

forms of decadence are presented in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee. It explores, in specific, the framework of decadence and degeneration in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee. Therefore, the chapter traces the origin and development of decadence and its relevance to the current study. The depiction of the uncomfortable, seemingly deliberate depiction of misery through various coping mechanisms, is studied and analyzed in the chapter. The characteristics of decadence can be strongly felt in the following novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee: *English, August: An Indian Story, Weight loss, The Mammaries of the Welfare State, Fairy Tales at fifty, The Last Burden*.

The decadence movement of the nineteenth century broke norms of sexuality and counter questioned the aesthetic sensibility which aimed to sanitize the chaste, moral, or pure art forms, emerged as a contender with extreme forms of visual representations in the field of art and literature (Glick 325). Degeneration, another similar concept that occurs as a consequence of decadence and dystopia in the novels of Chatterjee, defines demise, decay, and a fall. The fallen state of affairs of the individuals with little passion for their life and their work forms a decadent world. The attributes of Bhola's sexual escapades and his inability to cope with his bodily desires, use of grotesque descriptions to increase the intensity of the decadent state of his life turn Chatterjee's story *Weight Loss* into a decadent novel. Decadence in the form of bureaucratic corruption and apathy within Madna, Agastya's apathy towards the job and his life constitute the notion of decline in *English, August.* The fall of the world where bureaucracy seems to rule and political dynasties making policies to benefit themselves is portrayed in *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*. Degeneration is predominantly found in the disintegration of a family in *The Last Burden*. The issues of religion, money, the status of the family within the society resembles a common story of most families, but the descriptions of the anxieties and a dispassionate association

towards each other make the novel speak of the fall of a dysfunctional family. Twisted stories with images of violence and how the twins take different paths to seek peace and meaning in the violent ambiance add to the decay as we understand from the novel *Fairy Tales at Fifty*.

Decadence employs rupture as a means to depict decline in the novels of Chatterjee. The rupture here refers to the disintegration, degeneration, and anything decadent to disrupt lives and families. Simultaneously, it appears to be a medium of expressing the complexities of life. If the decadence movement in Paris, Rome began to open new avenues and ways to generative art or literature, Chatterjee's fiction herald regression and degeneration. The decline within the framework of decadence and degeneration does not promise a renewal. It does not assure a definite goalpost that suggests a change for the better. Chatterjee's fiction suggests that he is not inclined in the interesting or the curious. The writer is drawn to the uninteresting, defined by drabness and dullness, and culminates in decadence.

The fourth chapter is titled "Locating Alienation in the Dystopian World of Upamanyu Chatterjee's fiction." This chapter investigates one of the central elements in the world of Upamanyu Chatterjee's fiction –Alienation. The form of alienation seems distinct and exemplifies the separation between the protagonists and themselves, individuals and the environment. It also studies how alienation becomes an expression of the distance within and outside the protagonists of Upamanyu Chatterjee. The study would do the following: first, the chapter traces the development of alienation as a concept. Further, it documents notions of alienation and how thinkers and scholars have interpreted the concept. Finally, it examines the acts of the protagonists in Chatterjee novels using Walter Kaufmann's notion of alienation. This chapter primarily traces the instances and evidence from the selected texts within the framework of decadence and

dystopia to show how alienation operates within the self and the external world. The presence of alienation in the subsequent novels are examined: *English, August*: *An Indian Story, The Last Burden, Way To Go.*

The first novel, *English, August* provides an adequate base for the exploration of alienation as a recurring motif in Chatterjee's fictional world. The protagonists' struggle and dialogue within and not much with the immediate environment allows us to see Agastya in *English, August* trying to cope with a sense of boredom in Madna. Along the whole journey, Agastya seems to mention the purposelessness and futility of life haphazardly. His separation from the external world could be due to the bureaucratic procedures, boredom from his job, none to mingle with or share his deepest desires. Therefore, alienation can be observed as an expression of the distance he feels due to the inability to connect with the world. Adapting to the given world does not become an option but creates a space for protagonists like Agastya in *English, August* to witness the on goings. Whereas, Jamun's dissociation in the *Last Burden* helps him alienate from the family and its conflicts. He is used as a confidante where the members express their innermost feelings about each other while Jamun remains alienated from all. It also aids him to look at life and experience the futility of finding his missing father in *Way To Go*.

Alienation, in this sense, aligns with the views of Walter Kaufmann. It provides space to distance oneself to get a perspective and being neutral to the external world. So, alienation need not necessarily be a mere separation or may not always be viewed as a negative concept (Kaufmann x1iv). However, it does express pessimism and sometimes views the outside world with cynicism.

Chatterjee's world qualifies alienation with the individual experiences and their expression of being a misfit in a given situation. They are found in a state of misery as they do not seem to be responsible for their choices of what they want to be. Their pursuits are limited to the limiting beliefs that one could be sane if one continues to be in chaos. The chaos is treated as an everyday occurrence. In the case of Agastya, alienation is expressed in the form of boredom in Madna and his bureaucratic life. The external factors such as bureaucracy and a set of unproductive days allow him to take things for granted as he witness apathy all around him, including the symbols of the past. There is an inherent feeling of separation that exists even before the protagonist explores the world.

Jamun in *The Last Burden* also seems to be a misfit in his own family. The conflicts create a hostile environment that forces him to be a recluse. The distance allows him to continue to divorce the idea of a family. He refuses to marry Kasturi as the fall of the familial relationships forces him to stay away. Although he desires a partner, nothing stirs him to take the initiative. However, the distance makes silence befriend him at the worse times of his life when he seeks an escape from his family. The escape is crucial for the study of alienation. It empowers individuals with this form of escape from the issues that challenge their identity. It becomes intense in the sequel, *Way To Go*, separating the 'real' and the imaginary for Jamun. The conversation within Jamun of the ridiculousness of finding his missing father and giving up the search is impactful, as this separation brings the question of the futility of life and search for meaning in life. Alienation stirs the individual and gives way to the feeling of loneliness and isolation. Their self-talk, mostly about the ridiculousness of life in general, hint at Chatterjee's novels' preoccupation with alienation.

The ludicrous and existential difficulties of a human being were central to the concept of alienation in European novels and literature. The inability to connect with the world and the misery caused by the self appears to be the topic of most novels. Most European fiction revolves around the total meaninglessness of life and existence, as well as the quest to find a purpose (Golomb 13-56, 170). They delve into the concept of self and loss of identity, as well as the causes for the characters' frustrations in a world that appears to be uninterested in them. In contrast, estrangement is a distinct trait of Chatterjee's dystopian universe. Unlike in the novels of European context, in his world the individuals/protagonists appear to have already been alienated well before they encounter a disillusioned world. The meaninglessness is present, yet the characters are fully aware that their search is hopeless.

Upamanyu Chatterjee's works are challenging to describe and categorize in terms of the already available theoretical frameworks. The novels reveal the unique traits of the individuals going through the intense predicament of alienation. The protagonists in the world of Chatterjee are economically secure and are products of English education. Yet they seem to lack intimacy in personal relationships. Characters generally suffer from boredom and ennui and are cynical about the world they inhabit. Substance abuse and sexual escapades drive their inner senses and perhaps keep them afloat in dire situations. The individuals are presented as loners, yet seeking something that they do not know yet. At the same time, they want to escape the 'real.' It appears that they lead meaningless lives. Loneliness and listlessness are helped by either drug abuse or sexual fantasies. This could be attributed to the dystopian cloud hovering around the individuals. The concept of alienation as a clear separation exists as a means of expression to the frustrations in the fictional world of Chatterjee. Also, despite the separation, they can see the world as it is.

The final chapter presents the conclusions derived from the study. As the study began to trace elements of dystopia and decadence in the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee, it became evident that Chatterjee's fictional world is unlike the rest of the fictional worlds. Chatterjee's brand of dystopia is not exactly similar to the vision that Orwell or Huxley created in their fiction. The lack of a totalitarian political regime, overpowering technology, or the presence of a controlling powerhouse makes Chatterjee's novels different. At the same time, the overarching presence of 'bleakness' in the narratives binds his novels with other conventional dystopian works. It is distinct with its representation of decline as 'state' in itself. The novels are replete with regular contexts qualified with disturbance and restlessness, corruption, and seem prolonged with the chaos that defines their world. The novels lack a new dimension to life. And this gives a semblance of a vacuous situation where nothing happens.

The narratives fail to articulate the hindrances to the progress of a society. On the contrary, issues are brushed off or mocked with the least concern. Chatterjee's fiction seems to state that this situation of not engaging positively or negotiating with vagaries of the world can be an attempt to use the framework of dystopia to mitigate or escape from that world. Just like the protagonists' predicament, the narratives persist in facilitating non-closure leading to unhappy endings. One is reminded of the lines by W. B. Yeats, "Things fall apart, the center cannot hold" in *The Second Coming* (158). Chatterjee elaborates on the fragmentation and disintegration of lives and society at large.

It is challenging to articulate or describe the world of Chatterjee's fiction adequately. If the novels were set in the future, there could be a possibility of a precise dystopian predicament that humankind needs to reflect on before it falls apart. However, Chatterjee's novels are not of a bleak future but more about the miserable

present where ‘bleakness’ is all pervasive. The phenomena of decadence, dystopia, degeneration, and alienation themselves may be construed as norms. Therefore, Chatterjee’s fiction does not take refuge in generally accepted normative theory or framework, instead seem to question the very relevance and significance of subscribing to norms.

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